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A

LETTER

TO THE

HONOURABLE

THOMAS ERSKINE,

ON THE

PROSECUTION

OF

THOMAS WILLIAMS,

FOR

PUBLISHING THE AGE OF REASON;

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BY THOMAS PAINE,

AUTHOR OF COMMON SENSE, RIGHTS OF MAN, AGRARIAN JUSTICE, &c. &c.

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1797.

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## INTRODUCTION.

**I**T is a matter of surprize to some people to see Mr. Erskine act as counsel for a crown prosecution commenced against the right of opinion, I confess it is none to me, notwithstanding all that Mr. Erskine has said before; for it is difficult to know when a lawyer is to be believed: I have always observed that Mr. Erskine, when contending as a counsel for the right of political opinion, frequently took occasions, and those often dragged in head and shoulders, to laud, what he called the British Constitution, with a great deal of praise. Yet the same Mr. Erskine said to me in conversation, were government to begin de novo in England, they never would establish such a damned absurdity, (it was exactly his expression) as this is, ought I then to be surprised at Mr. Erskine for inconsistency.

In this prosecution Mr. Erskine admits the right of controversy; but says, that the Christian religion is not to be abused. This is somewhat sophistical, because while he admits the right of controversy, he reserves the right of calling that controversy, abuse: and thus, lawyer-like, undoes by one word, what he says in the other. I will, however, in this letter keep within the limits he prescribes; he will find here nothing about the Christian religion; he will find only a statement of a few cases, which shew the necessity of examining the books, handed to us from the Jews, in order to discover if we have not been imposed upon; together with some observations on the manner in which the trial of Williams has been conducted. If Mr. Erskine denies the right of examining those books, he had better profess himself at once an advocate for the establishment of an inquisition, and the re-establishment of the star chamber.

THOMAS PAINE.

A LETTER



# LETTER, &c.

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OF all the tyrannies that afflict mankind tyranny in religion is the worst: Every other species of tyranny is limited to the world we live in; but this attempts a stride beyond the grave, and seeks to pursue us into eternity. It is there, and not here, it is to God and not to man, it is to a heavenly and not to an earthly tribunal, that we are to account for our belief; if then we believe falsely and dishonourably of the Creator, and that belief is forced upon us, as far as force can operate, by human laws and human tribunals, on whom is the criminality of that belief to fall; on those who impose it, or on those on whom it is imposed?

A bookseller of the name of Williams has been prosecuted in London on a charge of blasphemy, for publishing a book intitled the *Age of Reason*: Blasphemy is a word of vast sound, but of equivocal and almost indefinite signification; unless we confine it to the simple idea of hurting or injuring the reputation of any one, which was its original meaning. As a word, it existed before Christianity existed, being a Greek word, or Greek anglosied, as all the etymological dictionaries will shew.

But behold how various and contradictory has been the signification and application of this equivocal word: Socrates, who lived more than four hundred years before the Christian æra, was convicted of blasphemy, for preaching against the belief of a plurality of gods, and for preaching the belief of one god, and was condemned to suffer death by poison: Jesus Christ was convicted of blasphemy under the Jewish law, and was crucified. Calling Mahomet an impostor would be blasphemy in Turkey; and denying the infallibility of the Pope and the Church would be blasphemy at Rome. What then is to be understood by this word blasphemy? We see that in the case of Socrates, truth was condemned as blasphemy. Are we sure that truth is not blasphemy in the present day? Woe, however, be to those who make it so, whoever they may be.

A book called the bible has been voted by men, and decreed by human laws, to be the word of God, and the disbelief of this is called blasphemy. But if the bible be not the word of God, it is the laws, and the execution of them, that is blasphemy, and not the disbelief. Strange stories are told of the Creator in that book. He is represented as acting under the influence of every human passion, even of the most malignant kind. If these stories are false, we err in believing them to be true, and ought not to believe them. It is therefore a duty, which every man owes to himself, and reverentially to his Maker, to ascertain by every possible enquiry, whether there be sufficient evidence to believe them or not.

My own opinion is decidedly, that the evidence does not warrant the belief, and that we sin in forcing that belief upon ourselves, and upon others. In saying this, I have no other object in view, than truth. But that I may not be accused of resting upon bare assertion, with respect to the equivocal state of the bible, I will produce an example, and I will not pick and cull the bible for the purpose. I will go fairly to the case. I will take the two first chapters of Genesis, as they stand, and shew from thence the truth of what I say, that is, that the evidence does not warrant the belief, that the bible is the word of God.

## CHAPTER I.

- 1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
- 2 And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
- 3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
- 4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.
- 5 And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night: and the evening and the morning were the first day.
- 6 ¶ And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.
- 7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament, from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.
- 8 And God called the firmament Heaven: and the evening and the morning were the second day.
- 9 ¶ And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.
- 10 And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.
- 11 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.
- 12 And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

13 And the evening and the morning were the third day.

14 ¶ And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night: and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.

15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth,

18 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

21 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

22 And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

23 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

24 ¶ And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

25 And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

26 ¶ And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

29 ¶ And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed: to you it shall be for meat.

30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

## CHAPTER II.

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.

4 ¶ These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were created; in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens,

5 And every plant of the field, before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field, before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, *and there was not a man to till the ground.*

6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

7 And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

8 ¶ And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

9 And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food: the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

11 The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.

12 And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx-stone.

13 And the name of the second river is Gibon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

14 And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

15 And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

18 ¶ And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him.

19 And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what

what he would call them : and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof

20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field : but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

21 And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept : and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.

22 And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh : she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife : and they shall be one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

These two chapters are called the Mosaic account of the creation ; and we are told, nobody knows by whom, that Moses was instructed by God to write that account.

It has happened that every nation of people has been world-makers ; and each makes the world to begin his own way, as if they had all been brought up, as Hudibras says, to the trade. There are hundreds of different opinions and traditions how the world began. My business, however, in this place, is only with those two chapters.

I begin then by saying, that those two chapters, instead of containing, as has been believed, one continued account of the Creation, written by Moses, contain two different and contradictory stories of a creation, made by two different persons, and written in two different styles of expression. The evidence that shews this, is so clear when attended to without prejudice, that, did we meet with the same evidence in any Arabic or Chinese account of a creation, we should not hesitate in pronouncing it a forgery.

I proceed to distinguish the two stories from each other.

The first story begins at the first verse of the first chapter, and ends at the end of the third verse of the second chapter ; for the adverbial conjunction, **THUS**, with which the second chapter begins, (as the reader will see) connects itself to the last verse of the first chapter, and those three verses belong to, and make the conclusion of, the first story

The second story begins at the fourth verse of the second chapter, and ends with that chapter. Those two stories have been confused into one, by cutting off the three last verses of the first story, and throwing them to the second chapter.

I go now to shew that those stories have been written by two different persons.

From the first verse of the first chapter, to the end of the third verse of the second chapter, which makes the whole of the first story, the word GOD is used without any epithet or additional word conjoined with it, as the reader will see; and this stile of expression is invariably used throughout the whole of this story, and is repeated no less than thirty-five times, viz. "In the beginning GOD created the heavens, and the earth, and the spirit of GOD moved on the face of the waters, and GOD said, Let there be light, and GOD saw the light, &c. &c."

But immediately from the beginning of the fourth verse of the second chapter, where the second story begins, the stile of expression is always the *Lord-God*, and this stile of expression is invariably used to the end of the chapter, and is repeated eleven times; in the one it is always GOD, and never the *Lord-God*, in the other it is always the *Lord-God*, and never GOD. The first story contains thirty-four verses, and repeats the single word GOD thirty-five times. The second story contains twenty-two verses, and repeats the compound word *Lord-God* eleven times; this difference of stile, so often repeated, and so uniformly continued, shews, that those two chapters, containing two different stories, are written by different persons, it is the same in all the different editions of the bible, in all the languages I have seen.

Having thus shewn from the difference of stile, that those two chapters divided, as they properly divide themselves, at the end of the third verse of the second chapter, are the work of two different persons, I come to shew from the contradictory matters they contain, that they cannot be the work of one person, and are two different stories.

It is impossible, unless the writer was a lunatic, without memory, that one and the same person could say, as is said in the 27 and 28 verses of the first chapter—"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them, and God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over every living thing, that moveth on the face of the earth." It is, I say, impossible, that the same person, who said this, could afterwards say, as is said in the second chapter, ver. 5, *and there was not a man to till the ground*; and then proceed in the 7th verse to give another account of the making a man for the first time, and afterwards of the making a woman out of his rib.

Again, one and the same person could not write, as is written in the 29th verse of the first chapter; behold I (God) have given you every herb bearing seed, which is on the face of all the earth; and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree bearing seed, to you it shall be for meat and afterwards say, as is said in the second chapter, that the *Lord-God* planted a tree in the midst of a garden, and forbade man to eat thereof.

Again, one and the same person could not say, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them, and on the seventh day God ended all his work, which he had made," and immediately after,

after, set the Creator to work again, to plant a garden, to make a man and a woman, &c. as is done in the second chapter.

Here are evidently two different stories contradicting each other—According to the first, the two sexes, the male and the female, were made at the same time. According to the second, they were made at different times. The man first, the woman afterwards. According to the first story, they were to have dominion over all the earth. According to the second, their dominion was limited to a garden. How large a garden it could be, that one man and one woman could dress and keep in order, I leave to the prosecutor, the judge, the jury, and Mr. Frkine, to determine.

The story of the talking serpent, and its tete a tete with Eve: the doleful adventure, called the *Fall of Man*; and how he was turned out of this fine garden, and how the garden was afterwards locked up and guarded by a flaming sword, (if any one can tell what a flaming sword is) belong altogether to the second story. They have no connection with the first story. According to the first there was no garden of Eden; no forbidden tree: The scene was the whole earth, and the fruit of all trees was allowed to be eaten.

In giving this example of the strange state of the bible, it cannot be said I have gone out of my way to seek it, for I have taken the beginning of the book; nor can it be said I have made more of it, than it makes of itself. That there are two stories is as visible to the eye, when attended to, as that there are two chapters, and that they have been written by different persons, nobody knows by whom. If this, then, is the strange condition, the beginning of the bible is in, it leads to a just suspicion, that the other parts are no better, and consequently it becomes every man's duty to examine the case. I have done it for myself, and am satisfied, that the bible is *fabulous*.

Perhaps I shall be told in the cant-language of the day, as I have often been told by the bishop of Landaff and others, of the great and laudable pains, that many pious and learned men have taken to explain the obscure, and reconcile the contradictory, or as they say, the *seemingly contradictory* passages of the bible. It is because the bible needs such an undertaking, that is one of the first causes to suspect it is NOT the word of God: this single reflection, when carried home to the mind, is in itself a volume.

What! does not the Creator of the Universe, the Fountain of all Wisdom, the Origin of all Science, the Author of all Knowledge, the God of Order and of Harmony, know how to write? When we contemplate the vast œconomy of the creation, when we behold the unerring regularity of the visible solar system, the perfection with which all its several parts revolve, and by corresponding assemblage, form a whole;—when we launch our eye into the boundless ocean of space, and see ourselves surrounded by innumerable worlds, not one of which varies from its appointed place—when we trace the power of a Creator, from a mite to an elephant; from an atom to an universe; can we suppose that the mind that could conceive such a design, and

the power that executed it with incomparable perfection, cannot write without inconsistency; or that a book so written can be the work of such a power? The writings of Thomas Paine, even of Thomas Paine, need no commentator to explain, expound, derange, and rearrange their several parts, to render them intelligible—he can relate a fact, or write an essay, without forgetting in one page what he has written in another; certainly then, did the God of all perfection condescend to write or dictate a book, that book would be as perfect as himself is perfect: The bible is not so, and it is confessedly not so, by the attempts to amend it.

Perhaps I shall be told, that though I have produced one instance, I cannot produce another of equal force. One is sufficient to call in question the genuineness or authenticity of any book that pretends to be the word of God: for such a book would, as before said, be as perfect as its author is perfect.

I will, however, advance only four chapters further into the book of Genesis and produce another example that is sufficient to invalidate the story to which it belongs.

We have all heard of Noah's Flood; and it is impossible to think of the whole human race, men, women, children, and infants (except one family) deliberately drowning, without feeling a painful sensation; that heart must be a heart of flint that can contemplate such a scene with tranquility. There is nothing in the ancient mythology, nor in the religion of any people we know of upon the globe, that records a sentence of their God, or of their Gods, so tremendously severe and merciless. If the story be not true, we blasphemously dishonour God by believing it, and still more so, in forcing, by laws and penalties, that belief upon others. I go now to shew from the face of the story, that it carries the evidence of not being true.

I know not if the judge, the jury, and Mr. Erskine, who tried and convicted Williams, ever read the bible, or know any thing of its contents, and therefore I will state the case precisely:

There were no such people, as Jews or Israelites, in the time that Noah is said to have lived, and consequently, there was no such law as that which is called the Jewish or Mosaic Law. It is, according to the bible, more than six hundred years from the time the flood is said to have happened, to the time of Moses, and consequently the time the flood is said to have happened, was more than six hundred years prior to the law, called the Law of Moses, even admitting Moses to have been the giver of that law, of which there is great cause to doubt.

We have here two different epochs, or points of time; that of the flood, and that of the law of Moses; the former more than six hundred years prior to the latter. But the maker of the story of the flood, whoever he was, has betrayed himself by blundering, for he has reversed the order of the times. He has told the story, as if the law of Moses was prior to the flood; for he has made God to say to Noah, Genesis, chap. vii. ver. 2, "Of every clean beast, thou shalt take  
" unto



“ unto thee by sevens, male and his female, and of beasts that are “ *not clean* by two, the male and his female.” This is the Mosaic law, and could only be said after that law was given, not before : There was no such thing as beasts clean and unclean in the time of Noah—it is no where said, they were created so. They were only *declared* to be so, *as meats*, by the Mosaic law, and that to the Jews only, and there were no such people as Jews in the time of Noah. This is the blundering condition in which this strange story stands.

When we reflect on a sentence, so tremendously severe, as that of consigning the whole human race, eight persons excepted, to deliberate drowning; a sentence, which represents the Creator, in a more merciless character than any of those, whom we call Pagans, ever represented the Creator to be, under the figure of any of their deities, we ought at least to suspend our belief of it, on a comparison of the beneficent character of the Creator, with the tremendous severity of the sentence; but when we see the story told with such an evident contradiction of circumstances, we ought to set it down for nothing better than a Jewish fable, told by nobody knows whom, and nobody knows when.

It is a relief to the genuine and sensible soul of man to find the story unfounded. It frees us from two painful sensations at once; that of having hard thoughts of the Creator, on account of the severity of the sentence; and that of sympathising in the horrid tragedy of a drowning world. He who cannot feel the force of what I mean, is not, in my estimation of character, worthy the name of a human being.

I have just said there is great cause to doubt, if the law, called the law of Moses, was given by Moses; the books, called books of Moses, which contain among other things, what is called the Mosaic law, are put in front of the bible, in the manner of a constitution, with a history annexed to it. Had these books been written by Moses, they would undoubtedly have been the oldest books in the bible, and entitled to be placed first, and the law and the history they contain, would be frequently referred to in the books that follow; but this is not the case. From the time of Othniel, the first of the judges (Judges, chap. iii. ver. 9) to the end of the book of Judges, which contains a period of four hundred and ten years, this law, and those books were not in practice, nor known among the Jews, nor are they so much as alluded to throughout the whole of that period. And if the reader will examine the 22d and 23d chapters of 2d book of Kings, and 34th chapter 2d Chron. he will find, that no such law, nor any such books were known in the time of the Jewish monarchy, and that the Jews were Pagans during the whole of that time, and of their judges.

The first time the law, called the law of Moses, made its appearance, was in the time of Josiah, about a thousand years after Moses was dead, it is then said to have been found by accident. The account of this finding, or pretended finding, is given,  
2d Chron.

2d Chron. chap. xxxiv. ver. 14, 15, 16, 18. "Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of the Lord, given by Moses, and Hilkiah answered, and said, to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord, and Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan, and Shaphan carried the book to the king, and Shaphan told the king, (Josiah), saying, Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book."

In consequence of this finding, which much resembles that of poor Chatterton finding manuscript poems of Rowley the Monk in the Cathedral Church at Bristol, or the late finding manuscripts of Shakespeare in an old chest, (two well known frauds.) Jonah abolished the Pagan religion of the Jews, massacred all the Pagan priests, though he himself had been a Pagan, as the reader will see in the 23d chap. 2d Kings, and thus established in blood, the law that is there called the law of Moses, and instituted a passover in commemoration thereof. The 22d ver. in speaking of this passover says, "surely there was not holden such a passover, from the days of the judges, that judged Israel, nor in all the day of the kings of Israel, nor the kings of Judah:" and the 25th ver. in speaking of this priest-killing Josiah, says, "Like unto him there was no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him." This verse like the former one, is a general declaration against all the preceding kings without exception. It is also a declaration against all that reigned after him, of which there were four, the whole time of whose reigning make but twenty-two years and six months, before the Jews were entirely broken up as a nation and their monarchy destroyed. It is therefore evident that the law, called the law of Moses, of which the Jews talk so much, was promulgated and established only in the latter time of the Jewish monarchy; and it is very remarkable, that no sooner had they established it than they were a destroyed people, as if they were punished for acting an imposition and affixing the name of the Lord to it, and massacring their former priests under pretence of religion. The sum of the history of the Jews is this—they continued to be a nation about a thousand years, they then established a law which they called the *law of the Lord given by Moses*, and were destroyed. This is not opinion but historical evidence.

Levi, the Jew, who has written an answer to the *Age of Reason*, gives a strange account of the law called the law of Moses.

In speaking of the story of the sun and moon standing still, that the Israelites might cut the throats of all their enemies, and hang all their kings, as told in Joshua, Chap. x. he says, "There is also another proof of the reality of this miracle, which is the appeal that the author of the book of Joshua makes to the book of Jasher, *is not this written in the book of Jasher.* Hence continues Levi, it is manifest that the book, commonly called the book of Jasher existed and was well known at the time the book of Joshua was written;"

“ written ;” and pray, Sir, continues Levi, “ what book do you think this was ? *why no other than the law of Moses ;*” Levi, like the bishop of Landaff and many other guess-work commentators, either forgets, or does not know, what there is in one part of the bible when he is giving his opinion upon another part.

I did not, however, expect to find so much ignorance in a Jew with respect to the history of his nation, though I might not be surpris'd at it in a bishop. If Levi will look into the account given in the first Chap. 2d book of Samuel, of the Amalakite slaying Saul and bringing the crown and bracelets to David, he will find the following recital, ver. 15, 17, 18, “ and David called one of the young men “ and said, go near and fall upon him (the Amalakite) and he smote “ him that he died, and David lamented with this lamentation over “ Saul and over Jonathan his son ; also he had them teach the children the use of the bow ; *behold it is written in the book of Jasher.*” If the book of Jasher were what Levi calls it, the law of Moses, written by Moses, it is not possible that any thing that David said or did could be written in that law, since Moses died more than five hundred years before David was born ; and on the other hand admitting the book of Jasher to be the law, called the law of Moses, that law must have been written more than five hundred years after Moses was dead, or it could not relate any thing said or done by David. Levi may take which of these cases he pleases, for both are against him.

I am not going, in the course of this letter, to write a commentary on the bible. The two instances I have produced, and which are taken from the beginning of the bible, shew the necessity of examining it. It is a book that has been read more, and examined less, than any book that ever existed. Had it come to us as an Arabic or Chinese book, and said to have been a sacred book by the people from whom it came, no apology would have been made for the confused and disorderly state it is in. The tales it relates of the Creator would have been censured, and our pity been excited for those who believed them. We should have vindicated the goodness of God against such a book, and preached up the disbelief of it out of reverence to him. Why then do we not act as honorably by the Creator in the one case, as we would do in the other. As a Chinese book we would have examined it ; ought we not then to examine it as a Jewish book ? The Chinese are a people who have all the appearance of far greater antiquity than the Jews, and in point of permanency, there is no comparison. They are also a people of mild manners, and of good morals, except where they have been corrupted by European commerce. Yet we take the word of a restless bloody-minded people, as the Jews of Palestine were, when we would reject the same authority from a better people. We ought to see it is habit and prejudice that have prevented people from examining the bible. Those of the church of England call it holy, because the Jews called it so, and because custom and certain acts of parliament call it so, and they read it from custom. Dissenters read it for the purpose of doctrinal controversy,

troverſy, and are very fertile in discoveries and inventions. But none of them read it for the pure purpose of information, and of rendering justice to the Creator by examining if the evidence it contains warrants the belief of its being what it is called. Instead of doing this, they take it blindfolded, and will have it to be the word of God whether it be so or not. For my own part, my belief in the perfection of the Deity, will not permit me to believe that a book so manifestly obscure, disorderly, and contradictory, can be his work. I can write a better book myself. This disbelief in me proceeds from my belief in the Creator. I cannot pin my faith upon the *ſay ſo* of Hilkiab the priest, who said he found it, or any part of it, nor upon Shaphan the scribe, nor upon any priest nor any scribe, or man of the law of the present day.

As to acts of parliament, there are some that say, there are witches and wizzards; and the persons who made those acts (it was in the time of James the First) made also some acts which call the bible the holy scriptures or word of God. But acts of parliament decide nothing with respect to God; and as these acts of parliament-makers were wrong with respect to witches and wizzards, they may also be wrong with respect to the book in question. It is therefore necessary that the book be examined, it is our duty to examine it; and to suppress the right of examination is sinful in any government or in any judge or jury. The bible makes God to say to Moses, Deut. chap. vii. 2d ver. "And when the Lord the God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them, thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them." Not all the priests, nor scribes, nor tribunals in the world, nor all the authority of man, shall make me believe that God ever gave such a *Robespertian precept* as that of shewing *no mercy*; and consequently it is impossible that I, or any person who believes as reverentially of the Creator as I do, can believe such a book to be the word of God.

There have been, and still are, those, who whilst they *profess* to believe the bible to be the word of God affect to turn it into ridicule. Taking their profession and conduct together, they act blasphemously; because they act as if *God himself* was not to be believed. The case is exceedingly different with respect to the *Age of Reason*. That book is written to shew from the bible itself, that there is abundant matter to suspect it is not the word of God, and that we have been imposed upon, first by Jews, and afterwards by priests and commentators.

Not one of those who have attempted to write answers to the *Age of Reason* have taken the ground upon which only an answer could be written. The case in question is not upon any point of doctrine, but altogether upon a matter of fact. Is the book called the bible the word of God or is it not? If it can be proved to be so, it ought to be believed as such; if not, it ought not to be believed as such. This is the true state of the case. The *Age of Reason* produces evidence to shew, and I have in this letter produced additional evidence, that it is *not* the word of God. Those who take the contrary side, should prove

prove that it is. But this they have not done nor attempt'ed to do, and consequently they have done nothing to the purpose.

The prosecutors of Williams have shrunk from the point as the answerers have done. They have availed themselves of prejudice instead of proof. If a writing was produced in a court of judicature, said to be the writing of a certain person, and upon the reality or non-reality of which, some matter at issue depended, the point to be proved would be, that such writing was the writing of such person. Or if the issue depended upon certain words, which some certain person was said to have spoken, the point to be proved would be, that such words were spoken by such person? and Mr. Erskine would contend the case upon this ground. A certain book is said to be the word of God, what is the proof that it is so, for upon this the whole depends; and if it cannot be proved to be so, the prosecution fails for want of evidence.

The prosecution against Williams charges him with publishing a book, entitled the *Age of Reason*, which, it says, is an impious blasphemous pamphlet, tending to ridicule and bring into contempt the holy scriptures. Nothing is more easy than to find abusive words, and English prosecutions are famous for this species of vulgarity. The charge however is sophistical; for the charge as growing out of the pamphlet should have stated, not as it now states, to ridicule and bring into contempt the holy scriptures, but to shew, that the books called the holy scriptures are not the holy scriptures. It is one thing if I ridicule a work as being written by a certain person; but it is quite a different thing, if I write to prove that such work was not written by such person. In the first case, I attack the person through the work; in the other case, I defend the honor of the person against the work. This is what the *Age of Reason* does, and consequently the charge in the indictment is sophistically stated. Every one will admit, that if the bible be *not* the word of God, we err in believing it to be his word, and ought not to believe it. Certainly, then, the ground the prosecution should take, would be to prove that the bible is in fact what it is called. But this the prosecution has not done and cannot do.

In all cases the prior fact must be proved, before the subsequent facts can be admitted in evidence. In a prosecution for adultery, the fact of marriage, which is the prior fact, must be proved before the facts to prove adultery can be received. If the fact of marriage cannot be proved, adultery cannot be proved; and if the prosecution cannot prove the bible to be the word of God, the charge of blasphemy is visionary and groundless.

In Turkey they might prove, if the case happened, that a certain book was bought of a certain bookseller, and that the said book was written against the koran. In Spain and Portugal they might prove, that a certain book was bought of a certain bookseller, and that the said book was written against the infallibility of the pope. Under the ancient mythology they might have proved, that a certain writing

was bought of a certain person, and that the said writing was written against the belief of a plurality of gods, and in the support of the belief of one God: Socrates was condemned for a work of this kind.

- All these are but subsequent facts and amount to nothing, unless the prior facts be proved. The prior fact with respect to the first case is, Is the *koran* the word of God? with respect to the second, Is the infallibility of the pope a truth? with respect to the third, Is the belief of a plurality of gods a true belief? and in like manner with respect to the present prosecution, Is the book called the *bible* the word of God? If the present prosecution prove no more than could be proved in any or all of these cases, it proves only as they do, or as an inquisition would prove; and, in this view of the case, the prosecutors ought at least to leave off reviling that infernal institution, the inquisition. The prosecution, however, though it may injure the individual may promote the cause of truth; because the manner in which it has been conducted appears a confession to the world, that there is no evidence to prove that the bible is the word of God. On what authority then do we believe the many strange stories that the bible tells of God.

This prosecution has been carried on through the medium of what is called a special jury, and the whole of a special jury is nominated by the master of the crown office. Mr. Erskine vaunts himself upon the bill he brought into parliament with respect to trials, for what the government-party calls, libels. But if in crown prosecutions the master of the crown office is to continue to appoint the whole special jury, which he does by nominating the forty-eight persons from which the solicitor of each party is to strike out twelve, Mr. Erskine's bill is only vapour and smoke. The root of the grievance lies in the manner of forming the jury, and to this Mr. Erskine's bill applies no remedy.

When the trial of Williams came on, only eleven of the special jurymen appeared, and the trial was adjourned. In cases where the whole number do not appear, it is customary to make up the deficiency by taking jurymen from persons present in court. This, in the law term, is called a *Tales*. Why was not this done in this case? Reason will suggest, that they did not chuse to depend on a man accidentally taken. When the trial recommenced the whole of the special jury appeared, and Williams was convicted: it is folly to contend a cause where the whole jury is nominated by one of the parties. I will relate a recent case that explains a great deal with respect to special juries in crown prosecutions.

On the trial of Lambert and others, printers and proprietors of the Morning Chronicle, for a libel, a special jury was struck on the prayer of the attorney-general, who used to be called Diabolus Regis or King's Devil.

Only seven or eight of the special jury appeared, and the attorney-general not praying a *Tales*, the trial stood over to a future day, when it was to be brought on a second time, the attorney-general prayed  
for

for a new special jury, but as this was not admissible, the original special jury was summoned. Only eight of them appeared, on which the attorney-general said, as I cannot, on a second trial, have a special jury, I will pray a *Tales*. Four persons were then taken from persons present in court, and added to the eight special jurymen. The jury went out at two o'clock to consult on their verdict, and the judge (Kenyon) understanding they were divided, and likely to be some time in making up their minds, retired from the bench, and went home. At seven, the jury went, attended by an officer of the court, to the judge's house, and delivered a verdict, "*Guilty of publishing, but with no malicious intention.*" The judge said, "*I cannot record this verdict; it is no verdict at all.*" The jury withdrew, and after setting in consultation till five in the morning, brought in a verdict, NOT GUILTY. Would this have been the case, had they been all special jurymen nominated by the master of the crown-office? This is one of the cases that ought to open the eyes of people with respect to the manner of forming special juries.

On the trial of Williams, the judge prevented the counsel for the defendant proceeding in the defence. The prosecution had selected a number of passages from the Age of Reason, and inserted them in the indictment. The defending counsel was selecting other passages to shew, that the passages in the indictment were conclusions drawn from premises, and unfairly separated therefrom in the indictment. The judge said, *he did not know how to act*; meaning thereby, whether to let the counsel proceed in the defence or not; and asked the jury, if they wished to hear the passages read which the defending counsel had selected. The jury said, no, and the defending counsel was in consequence silence. Mr. Erskine then, Falstaff-like, having all the field to himself, and no enemy at hand, laid about him most heroically, and the jury found the defendant *guilty*. I know not if Mr. Erskine ran out of court and hallooed, huzza for the bible and the trial by jury.

Robespierre caused a decree to be passed during the trial of Brissot and others, that after a trial had lasted three days, (the whole of which time, in the case of Brissot, was taken up by the prosecuting party) the judge should ask the jury (who were then a packed jury) if they were satisfied? If the jury said YES, the trial ended, and the jury proceeded to give their verdict, without hearing the defence of the accused party. It needs no depth of wisdom to make an application of this case.

I will now state a case to shew, that the trial of Williams is not a trial according to Kenyon's own explanation of law.

On a late trial in London (Selthens, versus Hooffman) on a policy of insurance, one of the jurymen, Mr. Dunnage, after hearing one side of the case, and without hearing the other side, got up and said, *it was as legal a policy of insurance as ever was written.* The judge, who was the same as presided on the trial of Williams, replied, *that it was a great misfortune when any gentleman of the jury makes up his mind*

on a cause before it was finished. Mr. Erskine, who in that case was counsel for the defendant; (in this, he was against the defendant) cried out, *it is worse than a misfortune, it is a fault.* The judge in his address to the jury, in summing up the evidence, expatiated upon, and explained the parts, which the law assigned to the counsel on each side, to the witnesses, and to the judge, and said, "*When all this was done, AND NOT UNTIL THEN, it was the business of the jury to declare what the justice of the case was; and that it was extremely rash and imprudent in any man to draw a conclusion before all the premises were laid before them, upon which that conclusion was to be grounded.*"—According then to Kenyon's own doctrine, the trial of Williams is an irregular trial, the verdict an irregular verdict, and as such, is not recordable.

As to special juries, they are but modern; and were instituted for the purpose of determining cases at law between merchants; because, as the method of keeping merchants accounts differs from that of common tradesmen, and their business by lying much in foreign bills of exchange, insurances, &c. is of a different description to that of common tradesmen, it might happen that a common jury might not be competent to form a judgment. The law that instituted special juries makes it necessary that the jurors be *merchants*, or of the degree of *squires*. A special jury in London is generally composed of merchants; and in the country of men called country squires, that is, fox hunters, or men qualified to hunt foxes. The one may decide very well upon a case of pounds, shillings, and pence, or of the counting-house; and the other of the jockey-club or the chace. But who would not laugh, that because such men can decide such cases, they can also be jurors upon theology. Talk with some London merchants about scripture, and they will understand you mean *scrip*, and tell you how much it is worth at the Stock Exchange. Ask them about theology, and they will say, they know of no such gentleman upon Change. Tell some country squires of the sun and moon standing still, the one on the top of a hill, and the other in a valley, and they will swear it is a lie of one's own making. Tell them that God-Almighty ordered a man to make a cake and bake it with a t—d and eat it, and they will say, it is one of Dean Swift's blackguard stories. Tell them it is in the bible, and they will lay a bowl of punch it is not, and leave it to the parson of the parish to decide. Ask *them* also about theology, and they will say, they know of no such a one on the turf. An appeal to such juries, serves to bring the bible into more ridicule than any thing the author of the Age of Reason has written; and the manner in which the trial has been conducted, shews, that the prosecutor dares not come to the point, nor meet the defence of the defendant. But all other cases apart, on what ground of right, otherwise than on the right assumed by an inquisition, do such prosecutions stand. Religion is a private affair between every man and his Maker, and no tribunal or third party has a right to interfere between them. It is not properly a thing of this world; it is only practised in this world; but



its object is in a future world; and it is no otherwise an object of just laws than for the purpose of protecting the equal rights of all, however various their beliefs may be. If one man chuse to believe the book called the bible to be the word of God; and another, from a convinced idea of the purity and perfection of God, compared with the contradictions the book contains; from the lasciviousness of some of its stories, like that of Lot getting drunk and debauching his two daughters, which is not spoken of as a crime, and for which the most absurd apologies are made; from the immorality of some of its precepts, like that of shewing no mercy; and from the total want of evidence on the case, thinks he ought not to believe it to be the word of God: each of them has an equal right; and if the one has a right to give his reasons for believing it to be so, the other has an equal right to give his reasons for believing the *contrary*. Any thing that goes beyond this rule is an inquisition. Mr. Erskine talks of his moral education; Mr. Erskine is very little acquainted with theological subjects, if he does not know there is such a thing as a *sincere* and *religious* belief that the bible is not the word of God. This is my belief; it is the belief of thousands far more learned than Mr. Erskine; and is a belief that is every day increasing. It is not infidelity, as Mr. Erskine prophanely and abusively calls it: it is the direct reverse of infidelity. It is a pure religious belief, founded on the idea of the perfection of the Creator. If the bible be the word of God, it needs not the wretched aid of prosecutions to support it; and you might with as much propriety make a law to protect the sunshine as to protect the bible, if the bible, like the sun, be the work of God. We see that God takes good care of the Creation he has made. He suffers no part of it to be extinguished; and he will take the same care of his word, if he ever gave *one*. But men ought to be reverentially careful and suspicious how they ascribe books to him as his *word*, which from this confused condition, would dishonour a common scribbler, and against which there is abundant evidence, and every cause to suspect imposition. Leave then the bible to itself. God will take care of it if he has any thing to do with it, as he takes care of the sun and the moon, which need not your laws for their better protection. As the two instances I have produced in the beginning of this letter, from the book of Genesis, the one respecting the account called the Mosaic account of the Creation; the other of the flood, sufficiently shew the necessity of examining the bible, in order to ascertain what degree of evidence there is for receiving or rejecting it as a sacred book. I shall not add more upon that subject; but in order to shew Mr. Erskine that there are religious establishments for public worship which make no profession of faith of the books called the holy scriptures, nor admit of priests, I will conclude with an account of a society lately began in Paris, and which is very rapidly extending itself.

The society takes the name of Theophilantropes, which would be rendered in English by the word Theophilanthropists, word compounded

pounded of three Greek words, signifying God, Love, and Man. The explanation given to this word is, *Lovers of God and Man, or Adorers of God and Friends of Man, adrateurs de dieu et amis des hommes.* The society proposes to publish each year a volume, intitled *Armée Religieuse des Theophilantropes, Year religious of the Theophilantropists*; the first volume is just published, intitled

**YEAR RELIGIOUS OF THE THEOPHILANTHROPISTS,**

OR

**ADORERS OF GOD AND FRIENDS OF MAN;**

Being a collection of the discourses, lectures, hymns, and canticles, for all the religious and moral festivals of the Theophilantropists during the course of the year, whether in their public temples or in their private families, published by the author of the *Manuel of the Theophilantropists.*

The volume of this year, which is the first, contains 214 pages duodecimo.

The following is the table of contents :

1. Precise history of the Theophilantropists.
2. Exercises common to all the festivals.
3. Hymn, No. I. God of whom the universe speaks.
4. Discourse upon the existence of God.
5. Ode II. The heavens instruct the earth.
6. Precepts of wisdom, extracted from the book of the Adorateurs.
7. Canticle, No. III. God Creator, soul of nature.
8. Extracts from divers moralists upon the nature of God, and upon the physical proofs of his existence.
9. Canticle, No. IV. Let us bless at our waking the God who gives us light.
10. Moral thoughts extracted from the bible.
11. Hymn, No. V. Father of the universe.
12. Contemplation of nature on the first days of the spring.
13. Ode, No. VI. Lord in thy glory adorable.
14. Extracts from the moral thoughts of Confucius.
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16. Continuation from the moral thoughts of Confucius.
17. Hymn, No. VII. All the universe is full of thy magnificence.
18. Extracts from an ancient sage of India upon the duties of families.
19. Upon the spring.
20. Thoughts moral of divers Chinese authors.
21. Canticle,

21. Canticle, No. VIII. Every thing celebrates the glory of the eternal.
22. Continuation of the moral thoughts of Chinese authors.
23. Invocation for the country.
24. Extracts from the moral thoughts of Theognis.
25. Invocation, Creator of man.
26. Ode, No. IX. Upon death.
27. Extracts from the book of the Moral Universal, upon happiness.
28. Ode, No. X. Supreme Author of Nature.

## INTRODUCTION,

ENTITLED,

### PRECISE HISTORY OF THE THEOPHILANTHROPISTS.

“ Towards the month of Vendimiaire, of the year 5, (Sept. 1796) there appeared at Paris, a small work, entitled, Manuel of the Theoantrophiles, since called, for the sake of easier pronounciation, Theophilantropes (Theophilanthropists) published by C———;

“ The worship set forth in this Manuel, of which the origin is from the beginning of the world, was then professed by some families in the silence of domestic life. But scarcely was the Manuel published, than some persons, respectable for their knowledge and their manners, saw, in the formation of a society open to the public, an easy method of spreading moral religion, and of leading by degrees, great numbers to the knowledge thereof, who appear to have forgotten it. This consideration ought of itself not to leave indifferent those persons who know that morality and religion, which is the most solid support thereof, are necessary to the maintenance of society as well as to the happiness of the individual. These considerations determined the families of the Theophilanthropists to unite publicly for the exercise of their worship.

“ The first society of this kind opened in the month of Nivose, year 5, (Jan. 1797,) in the street Denis, No. 34, corner of Lombard-street. The care of conducting this society was undertaken by five fathers of families. They adopted the Manuel of the Theophilanthropists. They agreed to hold their days of public worship on the days corresponding to Sundays, but without making this a hindrance to other societies to chuse such other day as they thought more convenient. Soon after this more societies were opened, of which some celebrate *on* the decadi (tenth day) and others *on* the Sunday: It was also resolved, that the committee should meet one hour each week for the purpose of preparing or examining the discourses and lectures proposed for the next general assembly. That the general assemblies should be called Fetes (festivals) religious and moral. That those festivals

festivals should be conducted in principle and form, in a manner, as not to be considered as the festivals of an exclusive worship; and that in recalling those who might not be attached to any particular worship, those festivals might also be attended as moral exercises by disciples of every sect, and consequently avoid, by scrupulous care, every thing that might make the society appear under the name of a sect. The society adopts neither *rites* nor *priesthood*, and it will never lose sight of the resolution not to advance any thing as a society inconvenient to any sect or sects, in any time or country, and under any government.

“ It will be seen that it is so much the more easy for the society to keep within this circle, because, that the dogmas of the Theophilanthropists are those upon which all the sects have agreed, that their moral is that upon which there has never been the least dissent; and that the name they have taken expresses the double end of all the sects, that of leading to the *adoration of God and love of man*.

“ The Theophilanthropists do not call themselves the disciples of such or such a man. They avail themselves of the wise precepts that have been transmitted by writers of all countries and in all ages. The reader will find in the discourses, lectures, hymns, and canticles, which the Theophilanthropists have adopted for their religious and moral festivals, and which they present under the title of *Armée Religieuse*, extracts from moralists, ancient and modern, divested of maxims too severe, or too loosely conceived, or contrary to piety, whether towards God or towards man.”

Next follow the dogmas of the Theophilanthropists or things they profess to believe. These are but two, and are thus expressed, *les Theophilanthropes croient à l'existence de dieu et à l'immortalité de l'ame*. The Theophilanthropists believe in the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul.

The manuel of the Theophilanthropists, a small volume of sixty pages, duodecimo, is published separately, as is also their catechism, which is of the same size. The principles of the Theophilanthropists are the same as those published in the first part of the *Age of Reason* in 1793, and in the second part in 1795. The Theophilanthropists as a society are silent upon all the things they do not profess to believe, as the *sacredness* of the books called the bible, &c. &c. They profess the immortality of the soul, but they are silent on the immortality of the body, or that which the church calls the resurrection. The author of the *Age of Reason* gives reasons for every thing he *disbelieves* as well as for those he *believes*; and where this cannot be done with safety, the government is a despotism, and the church an inquisition.

It is more than three years since the first part of the *Age of Reason* was published, and more than a year and half since the publication of the second part. The bishop of Landaff undertook to write an answer to the second part; and it was not until after it was known that the author of the *Age of Reason* would reply to the bishop, that the

the prosecution against the book was set on foot; and which is said to be carried on by some clergy of the English church. If the bishop is one of them, and the object be to prevent an exposure of the numerous and gross errors he has committed in his work (and which he wrote when report said that Thomas Paine was dead, it is a confession that he feels the weakness of his cause, and finds himself unable to maintain it. In this case, he has given me a triumph I did not seek, and Mr. Erskine, the herald of the prosecution, has proclaimed it.

THOMAS PAINE,

## DISCOURSE OF THOMAS PAINE

AT THE

SOCIETY

OF THE

## THEOPHILANTHROPISTS.

RELIGION has two principal enemies, Fanaticism and Infidelity, or that which is called Atheism. The first requires to be combated by reason and morality, the other by natural philosophy.

The existence of a God is the first dogma of the Theophilanthropists. It is upon this subject that I solicit your attention: for though it has been often treated of, and that most sublimely, the subject is inexhaustible; and there will always remain something to be said that has not been before advanced. I go therefore to open the subject, and to crave your attention to the end.

The universe is the bible of a true Theophilanthropist. It is there that he reads of God. It is there that the proofs of his existence are to be sought and to be found. As to written or printed books, by whatever name they are called, they are the works of man's hands, and carry no evidence in themselves that God is the author of any of them. It must be in something that man could not make, that we must seek evidence for our belief, and that something is the universe; the true bible; the inimitable word of God.

Contemplating the universe, the whole system of creation, in this point of light, we shall discover, that all that which is called natural philosophy is properly a divine study—It is the study of God through his works—It is the best study, by which we can arrive at a knowledge of his existence, and the only one by which we can gain a glimpse of his perfection.

Do we want to contemplate his power? we see it in the immensity of the Creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible WHOLE is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not written or printed books, but the scripture called the *Creation*.

It has been the error of the schools to teach astronomy, and all the other sciences, and subjects of natural philosophy, as accomplishments only;

only; whereas they should be taught theologically, or with reference to the Being who is the author of them; for all the principles of science are of Divine origin. Man cannot make, or invent, or contrive principles. He can only discover them; and he ought to look through the discovery to the author.

When we examine an extraordinary piece of machinery, an astonishing pile of architecture, a well executed statue, or an highly finished painting, where life and action are imitated, and habit only prevents our mistaking a surface of light and shade for cubical solidity, our ideas are naturally led to think of the extensive genius and talents of the artist. When we study elements of geometry, we think of Euclid. When we speak of gravitation, we think of Newton. How then is it, that when we study the works of God in the Creation, we stop short and do not think of God? It is from the error of the schools in having taught those subjects as accomplishments only, and thereby separated the study of them from the Being who is the author of them.

The schools have made the study of theology to consist in the study of opinions in written or printed books; whereas theology should be studied in the works or book of the creation. The study of theology in books of opinions has often produced fanaticism, rancour, and cruelty of temper; and from hence have proceeded the numerous persecutions, the fanatical quarrels, the religious burnings and massacres, that have desolated Europe. But the study of theology in the works of the creation produces a direct contrary effect. The mind becomes at once enlightened and serene; a copy of the scene it beholds; information and adoration go hand in hand; and all the social faculties become enlarged.

The evil that has resulted from the error of the schools, in teaching natural philosophy as an accomplishment only, has been that of generating in the pupils a species of Atheism. Instead of looking through the works of Creation to the Creator himself, they stop short, and employ the knowledge they acquire to create doubts of his existence. They labour, with studied ingenuity, to ascribe every thing they behold to inmate properties of matter; and jump over all the rest by saying, that matter is eternal.

Let us examine this subject; it is worth examining; for if we examine it through all its cases, the result will be, that the existence of a superior cause, or that which man calls God, will be discoverable by philosophical principles.

In the first place, admitting matter to have properties, as we see it has, the question still remains, how came matter by those properties? To this they will answer, that matter possessed those properties eternally. This is not solution, but assertion; and to deny it is equally as impossible of proof as to assert it. It is then necessary to go further, and therefore I say,—if there exist a circumstance that is *not* a property of matter, and without which the universe, or to speak in a limited degree, the solar system, composed of planets and a sun,

could not exist a moment ; all the arguments of Atheism, drawn from properties of matter, and applied to account for the universe, will be overthrown, and the existence of a superior cause, or that which man calls God, becomes discoverable, as is before said, by natural philosophy.

I go now to shew that such a circumstance exists, and what it is :

The universe is composed of matter, and, as a system, is sustained by motion. Motion is *not a property* of matter, and without this motion the solar system could not exist. Were motion a property of matter, that undiscovered and undiscoverable thing called perpetual motion would establish itself. It is because motion is not a property of matter, that perpetual motion is an impossibility in the hand of every being but that of the Creator of motion. When the pretenders to Atheism can produce perpetual motion, and not till then, they may expect to be credited.

The natural state of matter, as to place, is a state of rest. Motion, or change of place, is the effect of an external cause acting upon matter. As to that faculty of matter that is called gravitation, it is the influence which two or more bodies have reciprocally on each other to unite and be at rest. Every thing which has hitherto been discovered with respect to the motion of the planets in the system, relates only to the laws by which motion acts, and not to the cause of motion. Gravitation, so far from being the cause of motion to the planets that compose the solar system, would be the destruction of the solar system, were revolutionary motion to cease ; for as the action of spinning upholds a top, the revolutionary motion upholds the planets in their orbits, and prevents them from gravitating and forming one mass with the sun. In one sense of the word, philosophy knows, and atheism, says, that matter is in perpetual motion. But the motion here meant refers to the *state* of matter, and that only on the surface of the earth. It is either decomposition, which is continually destroying the form of bodies of matter, or recomposition, which renews that matter in the same or another form, as the decomposition of animal or vegetable substances enter into the composition of other bodies. But the motion that upholds the solar system is of an entire different kind, and is not a property of matter. It operates also to an entire different effect. It operates to *perpetual preservation*, and to prevent *any change* in the state of the system.

Giving then to matter all the properties which philosophy knows it has, or all that atheism ascribes to it, and can prove, and even supposing matter to be eternal, it will not account for the system of the universe or of the solar system, because it will not account for motion, and it is motion that preserves it. When, therefore, we discover a circumstance of such immense importance, that without it the universe could not exist, and for which neither matter, nor any, nor all, the properties of matter can account ; we are by necessity forced into the rational and comfortable belief of the existence of a cause superior to matter, and that cause man calls God.



As to that which is called nature, it is no other than the laws by which motion and action of every kind, with respect to unintelligible matter, is regulated. And when we speak of looking through nature up to nature's God, we speak philosophically the same rational language as when we speak of looking through human law up to the power that ordained them.

God is the power or first cause, nature is the law, and matter is the subject acted upon.

But infidelity by ascribing every phænomenon to properties of matter, conceives a system for which it cannot account, and yet it pretends to demonstration. It reasons from what it sees on the surface of the earth, but it does not carry itself on the solar system existing by motion. It sees upon the surface a perpetual decomposition and re-composition of matter. It sees that an oak produces an acorn, an acorn an oak, a bird an egg, an egg a bird, and so on. In things of this kind it sees something which it calls a natural cause, but none of the causes it sees is the cause of that motion which preserves the solar system.

Let us contemplate this wonderful and stupendous system consisting of matter and existing by motion. It is not matter in a state of rest, nor in a state of decomposition or re-composition. It is matter systematized in perpetual orbicular or circular motion. As a system that motion is the life of it: as animation is life to an animal body, deprive the system of motion, and, as a system, it must expire. Who then breathed into the system the life of motion? What power impelled the planets to move since motion is not a property of the matter of which they are composed? If we contemplate the immense velocity of this motion, our wonder becomes increased, and our adoration enlarges itself in the same proportion. To instance only one of the planets, that of the earth we inhabit, its distance from the sun, the centre of the orbits of all the planets, is, according to observations of the transit of the planet Venus, about one hundred million miles; consequently the diameter of the orbit or circle in which the earth moves round the sun is double that distance; and the measure of the circumference of the orbit, taken as three times its diameter, is six hundred million miles. The earth performs this voyage in 365 days and some hours, and consequently moves at the rate of more than one million six hundred thousand miles every twenty-four hours.

Where will infidelity, where will atheism, find cause for this astonishing velocity of motion, never ceasing, never varying, and which is the preservation of the earth in its orbit? It is not by reasoning from an acorn to an oak, from an egg to a bird, or from any change in the state of matter on the surface of the earth, that this can be accounted for. Its cause is not to be found in matter nor in any thing we call nature. The atheist who affects to reason, and the fanatic who rejects reason, plunge themselves alike into inextricable difficulties. The one perverts the sublime and enlightening study of natural philosophy into a deformity of absurdities by not reasoning to  
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the end. The other loses himself in the obscurity of metaphysical theories, and dishonours the Creator, by treating the study of his works with contempt. The one is a half-rational of whom there is some hope, the other a visionary to whom we must be charitable.

When at first thought we think of a Creator, our ideas appear to us undefined and confused; but if we reason philosophically, those ideas can be easily arranged and simplified. *It is a Being whose power is equal to his will.* Observe the nature of the will of man. It is of an infinite quality. We cannot conceive the possibility of limits to the will. Observe, on the other hand, how exceedingly limited is his power of acting compared with the nature of his will. Suppose the power equal to the will and man would be a God. He would will himself eternal, and be so. He could will a creation and could make it. In this progressive reasoning, we see, in the nature of the will of man, half of that which we conceive in thinking of God, add the other half and we have the whole idea of a being who could make the universe, and sustain it by perpetual motion; because he could create that motion.

We know nothing of the capacity of the will of animals; but we know a great deal of the difference of their powers. For example, how numerous are the degrees, and how immense is the difference of power, from a mite to a man. Since then every thing we see below us shews a progression of power, where is the difficulty in supposing that there is at the *summit of all things* a Being in whom an infinity of power unites with the infinity of the will. When this simple idea presents itself to our mind we have the idea of a perfect being that man calls God.

It is comfortable to live under the belief of the existence of an infinitely protecting power; and it is an addition to that comfort to know, that such a belief is not a mere conceit of the imagination, as many of the theories that are called religious are; nor a belief founded only on tradition or received opinion, but is a belief deducible by the action of reason upon the things that compose the system of the universe; a belief arising out of visible facts, and so demonstrable is the truth of this belief, that if no such belief had existed the persons who now controvert it, would have been the persons who would have produced and propagated it; because, by beginning to reason, they would have been led on to reason progressively to the end, and thereby have discovered that matter and all the properties it has, will not account for the system of the universe, and that there must necessarily be a superior cause.

It was the excess to which imaginary systems of religion had been carried, and the intolerance, persecutions, burnings, and massacres, they occasioned, that first induced certain persons to propagate infidelity; thinking, that upon the whole, it was better not to believe at all, than to believe a multitude of things and complicated creeds, that occasioned so much mischief in the world. But those days are past; persecution has ceased, and the antidote then set up against it has no longer

longer even the shadow of apology. We profess, and we proclaim in peace, the pure, unmixed, comfortable, and rational belief of a God, as manifested to us in the universe. We do this without any apprehension of that belief being made a cause of persecution as other beliefs have been, or of suffering persecution ourselves. To God, and not to man, are all men to account for their belief.

It has been well observed at the first institution of this society, that the dogmas it professes to believe, are from the commencement of the world; that they are not novelties, but are confessedly the basis of all systems of religion, however numerous and contradictory they may be. All men in the outset of the religion they profess are Theophilanthropists. It is impossible to form any system of religion without building upon those principles, and therefore they are not sectarian principles, unless we suppose a sect composed of all the world.

I have said in the course of this discourse, that the study of natural philosophy is a divine study, because it is the study of the works of God in the Creation. If we consider theology upon this ground, what an extensive field of improvement in things both divine and human opens itself before us. All the principles of science are of divine origin. It was not man that invented the principles on which astronomy, and every branch of mathematics are founded and studied. It was not man that gave properties to the circle and the triangle. Those principles are eternal and immutable. We see in them the unchangeable nature of the Divinity. We see in them immortality, an immortality existing after the material figures that express those properties are dissolved in dust.

The society is at present in its infancy, and its means are small; but I wish to hold in view the subject I allude to, and instead of teaching the philosophical branches of learning as ornamental accomplishments only, as they have hitherto been taught, to teach them in a manner that shall combine theological knowledge with scientific instruction; to do this to the best advantage, some instruments will be necessary for the purpose of explanation, of which the society is not yet possessed. But as the views of the society extend to public good, as well as to that of the individual, and as its principles can have no enemies, means may be devised to procure them.

If we unite to the present instruction, a series of lectures on the ground I have mentioned, we shall, in the first place, render theology the most delightful and entertaining of all studies. In the next place, we shall give scientific instruction to those who could not otherwise obtain it. The mechanic of every profession will there be taught the mathematical principles necessary to render him a proficient in his art. The cultivator will there see developed the principles of vegetation; while, at the same time, they will be led to see the hand of God in all these things.









